(a) whether Government have decided to bring forward any legislation that gives sweeping powers to the bureaucracy to inspect, search and seize equipment belonging to media companies on a mere complaint against them; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for bringing that legislation?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is considering a comprehensive legislation to regulate broadcasting services. A need has also been felt to consult the media in the matter. It is therefore difficult to give final views on the proposal.

Spread of FM Radio

2166. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently, opening of 76 FM radio stations have been awarded to private parties;

(b) if so, how much rural and urban areas will be covered by their range;

(c) whether there is any perspective planning of Government to cover hundred per cent rural areas, especially in North East through spread of FM Radios; and

(d) if so, as private parties may not be bidding for such FM Radios whether Government would set up its own radio stations there?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI): (a) The fact is that besides 21 operational private FM radio stations of Phase I, Government has issued Letters of Intent (LoI) for setting up of additional 243 private FM radio stations in 37 cities across the country, out of which 6 have already become operational.

(b) All private FM radio stations allocated till now will be located in urban areas (87 cities). The coverage range of the transmitters may spillover to nearby rural areas also.

(c) and (d) Due to technical and financial constraints, it is not possible to cover 100% of rural areas by FM radio coverage at present. However,

2 FM radio channels of All India Radio are available throughout the territory of India including North East, excepting Andaman and Nicobar Islands, through DTH service of Doordarshan. Bids from private companies for setting up of FM radio stations were invited for all capital cities in the North East. However, due to subsequent withdrawal by successful bidders, no LoI stand issued for Kohima and Imphal. All India Radio has already set up FM radio station at Imphal. Setting up of FM radio station at Kohima by AIR is already underway.

Ownership of Media

2167. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Supreme Court stated to establish an independent autonomous public authority for regulating broadcast sector in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken based on the above;

(c) if not, the reasons for the same; and

(d) the method adopted if any to restrict the ownership of media?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI): (a), (b) and (d) The Hon'ble Supreme Court in its judgement in the Cricket Association of Bengal case delivered in 1995 had held that airwaves are public property and have to be controlled and regulated by public authority in the interest of public. Broadcasting Bill of 1997 was introduced in the Parliament but had lapsed. The Communication Convergence Bill, 2001 was introduced but this also lapsed. *Vide* Notification dated 9th January, 2004, the Central Government has notified broadcasting services and cable services to be telecommunication service under the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997. At present, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is considering a comprehensive legislation to regulate broadcasting services. A consultation paper along with a draft of the proposed Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill, 2006 giving all the details is posted on this Ministry's website *www.mib.nic.in* for inviting comments by 11th September, 2006 from general public including various stakeholders.

(c) Does not arise.